

MARVEL

227

DAVID • KIRK • MILLA

X-FACTOR



X-FACTOR



PREVIOUSLY...

X-FACTOR HAS TRACKED DOWN THE HANGMAN, WHO THEY ASSUMED KILLED HIS WIFE, SALLY, AND THEN ABSCONDED WITH HIS SON, TERRY. TURNS OUT, THOUGH, THAT HANGMAN'S SON WAS ACTUALLY KIDNAPPED BY A VILLAIN CALLING HIMSELF BLOODBATH, WHO HAS THREATENED TO KILL TERRY UNLESS HANGMAN DOES EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTS... WHICH APPARENTLY INVOLVES GOING AROUND EXECUTING PEOPLE.

MEANWHILE: PETER DAVID'S EIGHT-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER, CAROLINE, MET STAN "THE MAN" LEE AT THE NEW YORK COMIC CON AND SOMEWHAT FREAKED OUT. WOULDN'T GET ANYWHERE NEAR HIM, EVEN THOUGH THE MAYOR OF SUPERHERO CITY WAS HIS USUAL CONGENIAL SELF. WOULDN'T SHAKE HIS HAND; WOULDN'T EVEN FACE FRONT, TRUE BELIEVERS! TURNS OUT THE DAY BEFORE SHE'D SEEN A PICTURE OF HIM ON-LINE TAKEN THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO AND, UPON MEETING HIM IN PERSON, WAS TERRIFIED SHE WAS GOING TO CATCH WHATEVER DISEASE HE HAD THAT HAD AGED HIM MORE THAN THREE DECADES OVERNIGHT. EXCELSIOR!

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YOU NEVER KNOW
WHAT'S GOING TO
HAPPEN NEXT.

YOU MAY THINK YOU
DO. THAT YOU'RE
ANTICIPATING WHERE
THE NEXT THREAT
WILL COME FROM.

BUT NO MATTER
HOW MUCH YOU
THINK YOU'RE
PREPARED FOR IT...

KRRNCH

...YOU'RE
REALLY NOT.

GET
AWAY!

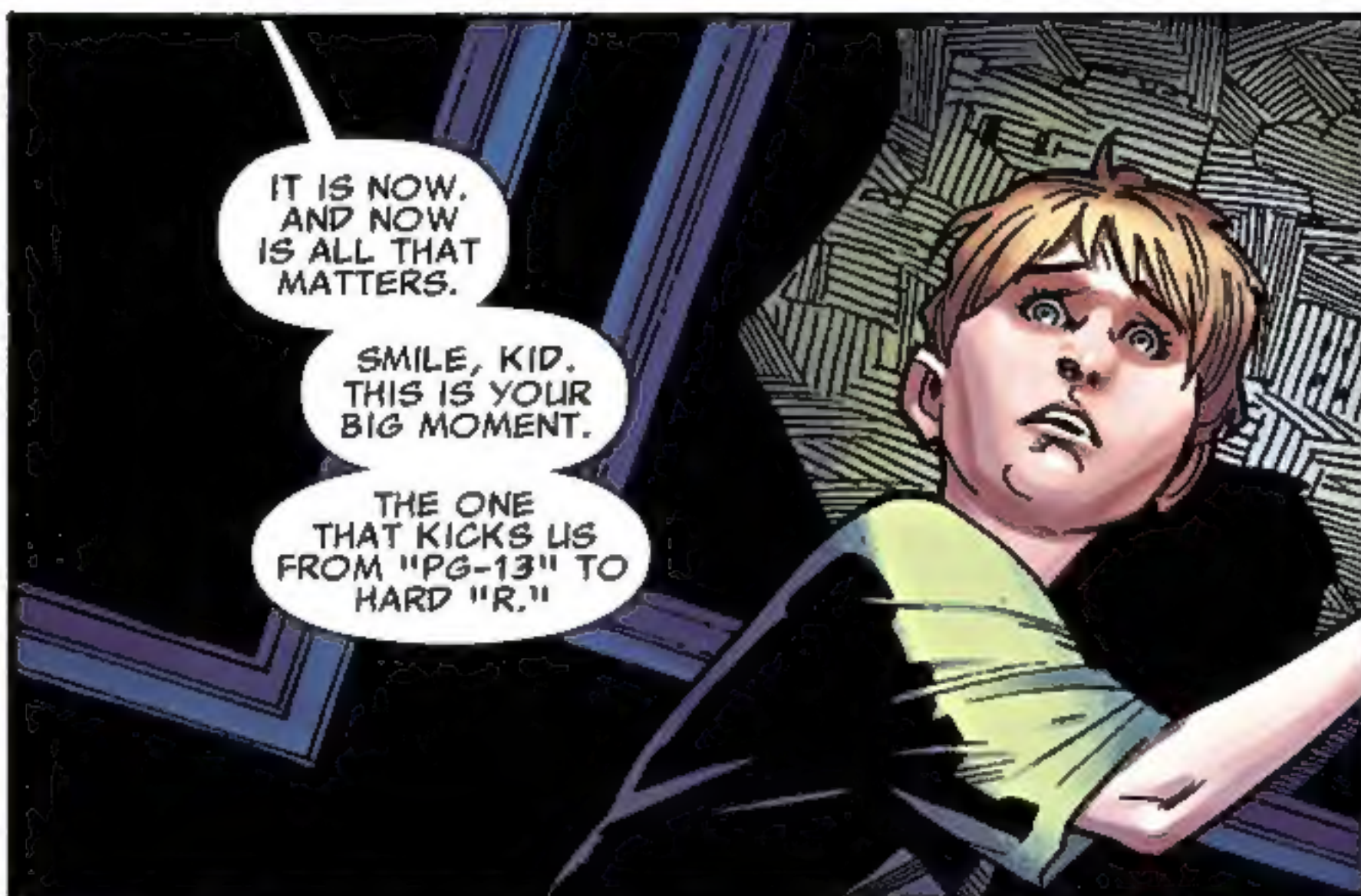


"GET AWAY!"?
SERIOUSLY?
THAT'S THE BEST
YOU'VE GOT,
TERRY?



WHAT THE
HELL HAS
HAPPENED TO
THE ART OF
DIALOGUE
NOWADAYS?

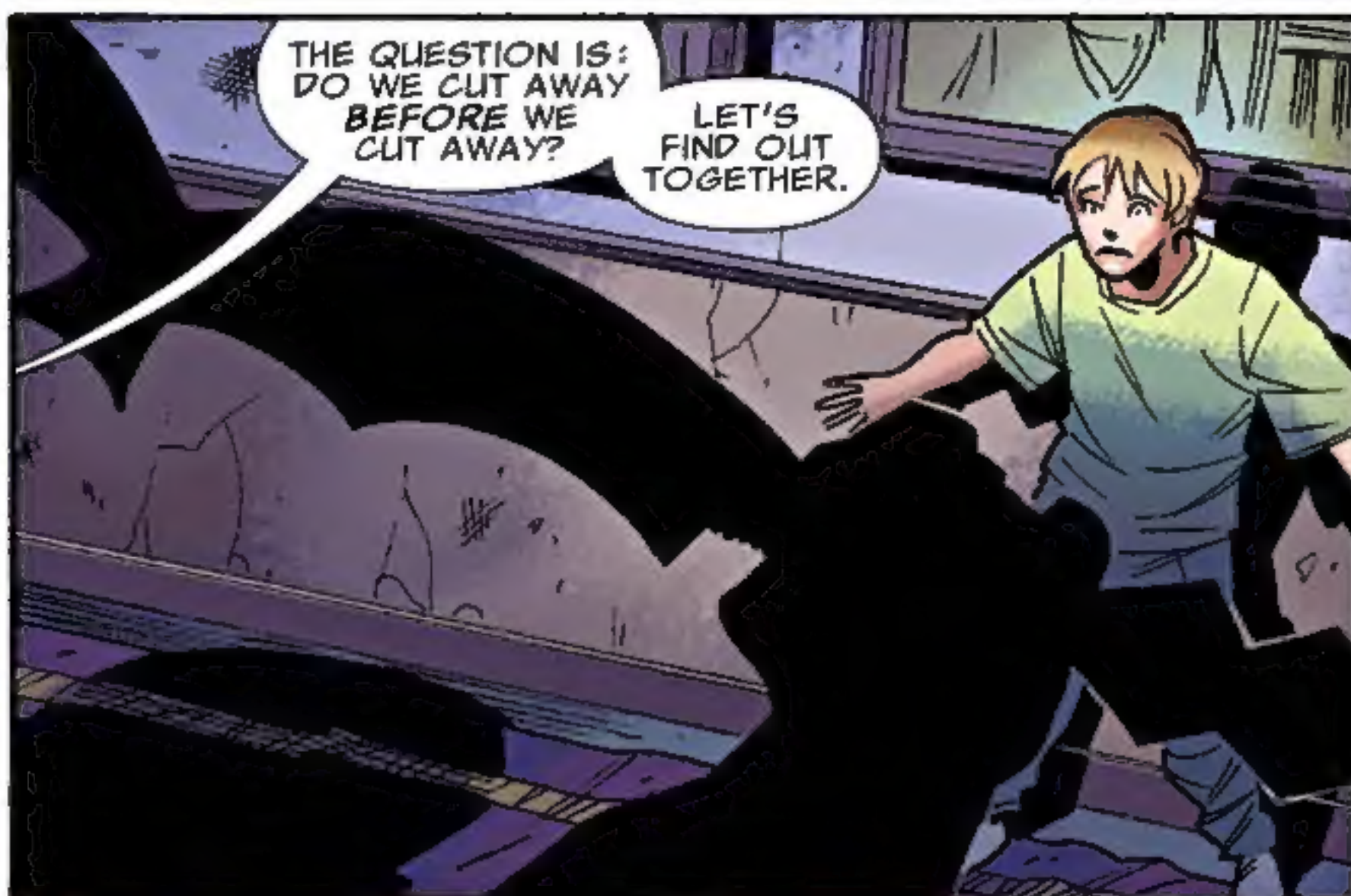
TH-THIS
WASN'T A DEAD
END BEFORE!



IT IS NOW,
AND NOW
IS ALL THAT
MATTERS.

SMILE, KID.
THIS IS YOUR
BIG MOMENT.

THE ONE
THAT KICKS US
FROM "PG-13" TO
HARD "R."



THE QUESTION IS:
DO WE CUT AWAY
BEFORE WE
CUT AWAY?

LET'S
FIND OUT
TOGETHER.



NOOOOOO





I DON'T GET THIS. YOU KNOW THAT THIS "BLOODBATH" GUY IS HOLED UP HERE WITH YOUR KID, HANGMAN...

...BUT YOU HAVEN'T GONE IN TO BUST HIM OUT?

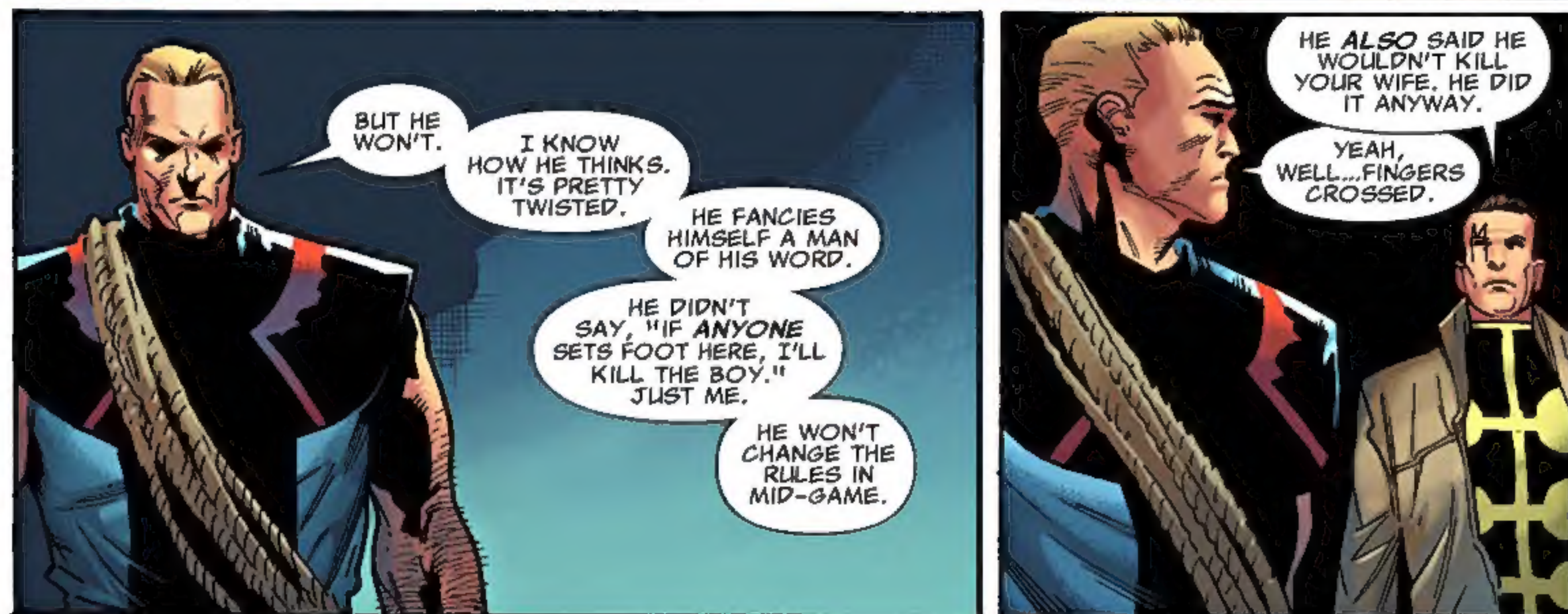
HE SAID IF I SET FOOT IN THE PLACE, TERRY DIES INSTANTLY.



I DINNA UNDERSTAND. WHAT'S TO STOP HIM KILLING YUIR BOY IF WE BUST IN?

TECHNICALLY, NOTHING.

"TECHNICALLY"?



BUT HE WON'T.

I KNOW HOW HE THINKS. IT'S PRETTY TWISTED.

HE FANCIES HIMSELF A MAN OF HIS WORD.

HE DIDN'T SAY, "IF ANYONE SETS FOOT HERE, I'LL KILL THE BOY." JUST ME.

HE WON'T CHANGE THE RULES IN MID-GAME.

HE ALSO SAID HE WOULDN'T KILL YOUR WIFE. HE DID IT ANYWAY.

YEAH, WELL...FINGERS CROSSED.



AND YOU'RE TELLING US HE'S KIND OF A FREELANCE DEMON? THAT RIGHT?

AS CONTRASTED TO OTHER DEMONS WHO ARE EMPLOYED FULL-TIME.

WELL, SURE, AT YOUR BIGGER LAW FIRMS.



THIS ISN'T A JOKE, AND YOU DON'T KNOW JACK, KID.

YOU GOT NO IDEA WHAT HAPPENS BEYOND THE EDGE OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING.

STAY BACK.

DON'T WORRY, STAR, I CAN HANDLE HIM.



IT'S LIKE I TOLD YOU. BLOODBATH FOUND ME AFTER I BROKE OUT OF HELL.

RIGHT, BECAUSE PEOPLE BREAK OUT OF HELL ALL THE TIME.

HE INSISTED I REAP SOULS FOR HIM. FIVE HUNDRED, ALREADY SLATED FOR DAMNATION. I TOLD HIM HE WASN'T THE BOSS OF ME.

SO HE GRABBED MY SON. THE ONE SALLY HID FROM ME.



I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND.

YOU KILL PEOPLE, YOU SEND THEIR SOULS TO HELL.

WHAT DOES THIS "BLOODBATH" GET OUT OF IT?



A COMMISSION.

SO AM I, THERESA.

I'M SERIOUS, LAYLA.



SOULS HAVE AN ENERGY CALLED "PUISSANCE." IT'S UNIQUE TO THEM.

IT CAN BE CONVERTED TO A MALLEABLE ENERGY IF YOU KNOW HOW TO SIPHON IT.

BLOODBATH APPARENTLY DOES. THAT'S HOW HE REANIMATED SALLY'S CORPSE AND INHABITED IT.



YAKETY-YAKETY. ARE WE X-FACTOR OR X-POSITION?

I'M MISSIN' A METS GAME FER THIS.

WE GO IN, WE NAIL THE BAD GUY AND WE'RE DONE.



SO WHY SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF?



LET'S JUST DO IT ALREADY.

GLAD Y'APPROVE.

THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR THE DIRECT APPROACH.



ANYONE ELSE THINK THIS IS A TRAP?

OH YES.

OBVIOUSLY.

BRING IT ON.

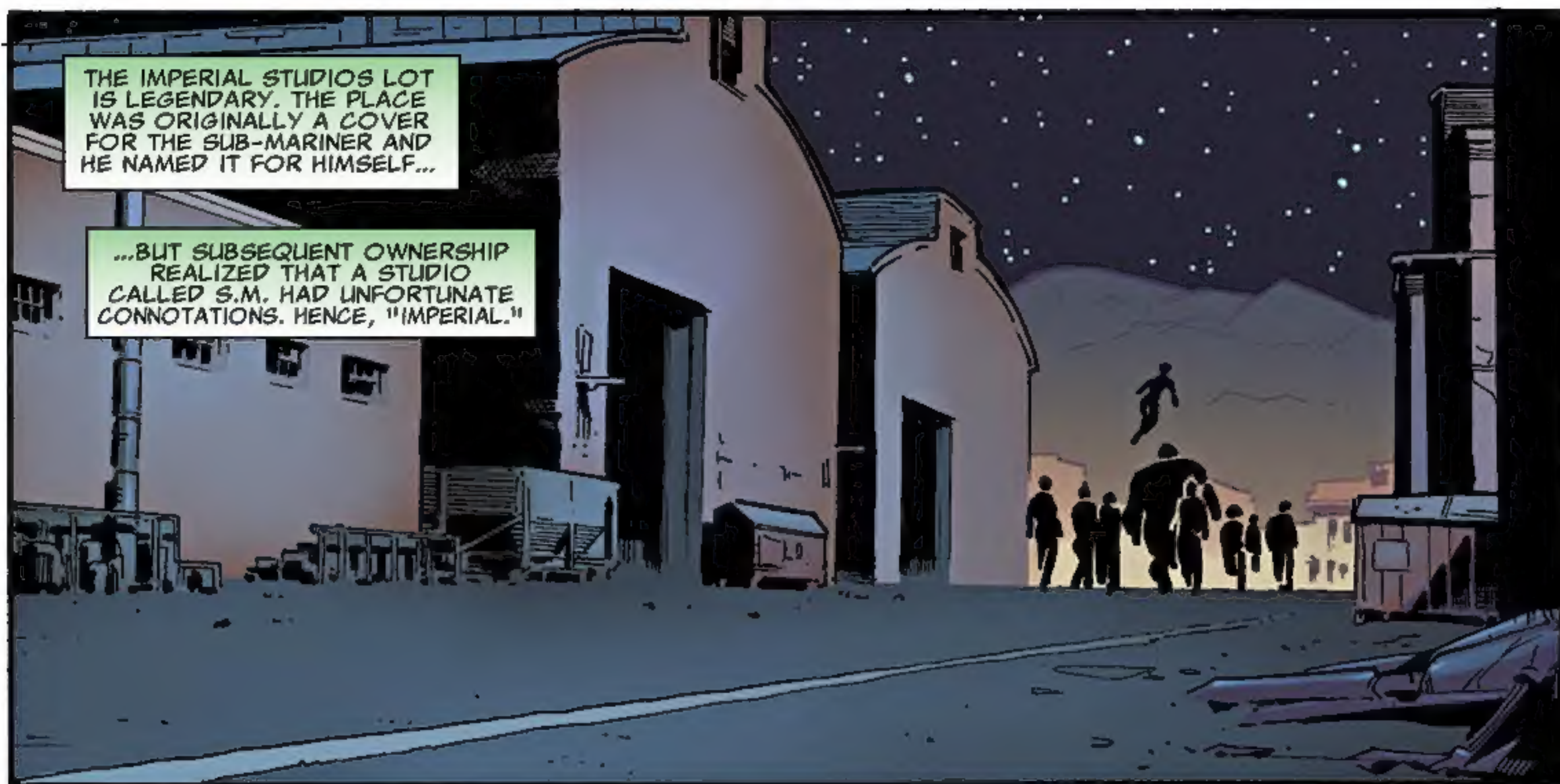


YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH DAVID CARRADINE'S DEATH, DID YOU?

OH, HELL NO. I LOVED HIM IN "KILL BILL!"

LONGSHOT!

RIGHT, RIGHT, COMING.



THE IMPERIAL STUDIOS LOT IS LEGENDARY. THE PLACE WAS ORIGINALLY A COVER FOR THE SUB-MARINER AND HE NAMED IT FOR HIMSELF...

...BUT SUBSEQUENT OWNERSHIP REALIZED THAT A STUDIO CALLED S.M. HAD UNFORTUNATE CONNOTATIONS. HENCE, "IMPERIAL."



IT WAS MODERATELY SUCCESSFUL UNTIL A SUSPICIOUS FIRE TORCHED HALF THE PLACE, NOW IT'S DESERTED WHILE THE INSURANCE COMPANIES WRANGLE OVER IT.



A PERFECT HIDING PLACE FOR SOME KIND OF PSYCHO DEMON AND HIS PRISONER.

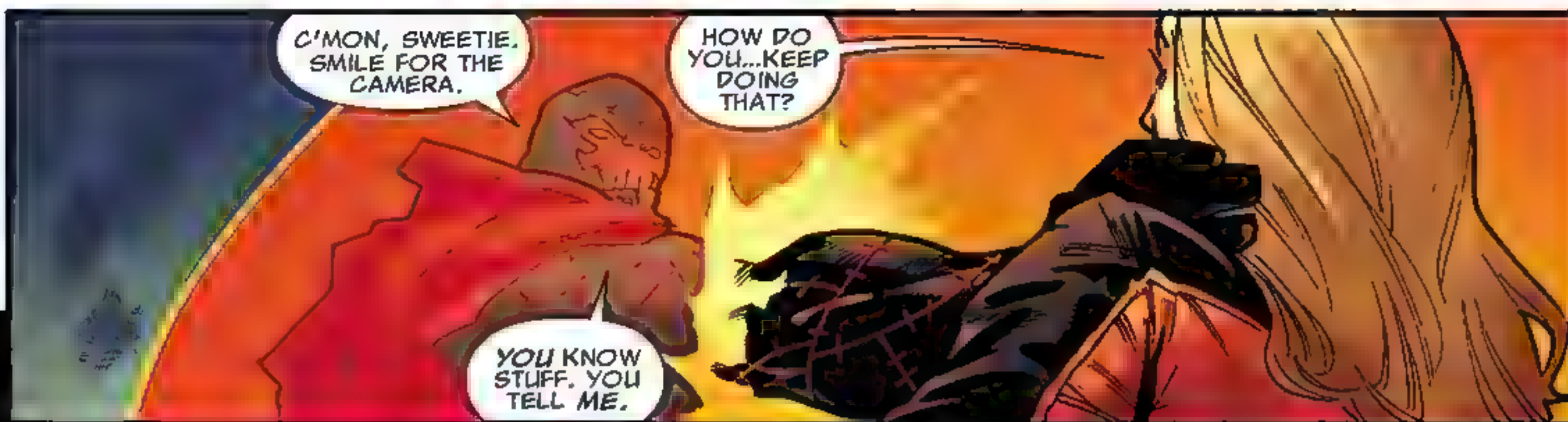
SO LET ME GUESS: WE SPLIT UP AGAIN.

RIGHT, BECAUSE LAST TIME WE DID THAT, IT WORKED OUT SO WELL THAT MADROX NEARLY GOT STRANGLED.





YOU
RUINED THE
SURPRISE.





OH, ONE
OF THE GENETIC
JUNKPILES WANTS
ANOTHER GO!

SINCE YOU
ASKED SO
NICELY.

HA HA!
PARRY! THRUST!
TOUCHE!

A HIT! A
PALPABLE HIT!
IT'LL RUN FOR
YEARS!



JAMIE!
AH GOT HIS
SCENT.

A LITTLE
LATE! HE'S
RIGHT
HERE!

NO, YE
GREAT BAMPOT!
AH MEAN AH CAN
TRACK WHERE HE
WAS AND--



--AND
FIND THE BOY,
OF COURSE.

THUNK

GO, AND
TAKE "ME"
WITH YOU.

WHAT'S A
"BAMPOT"?

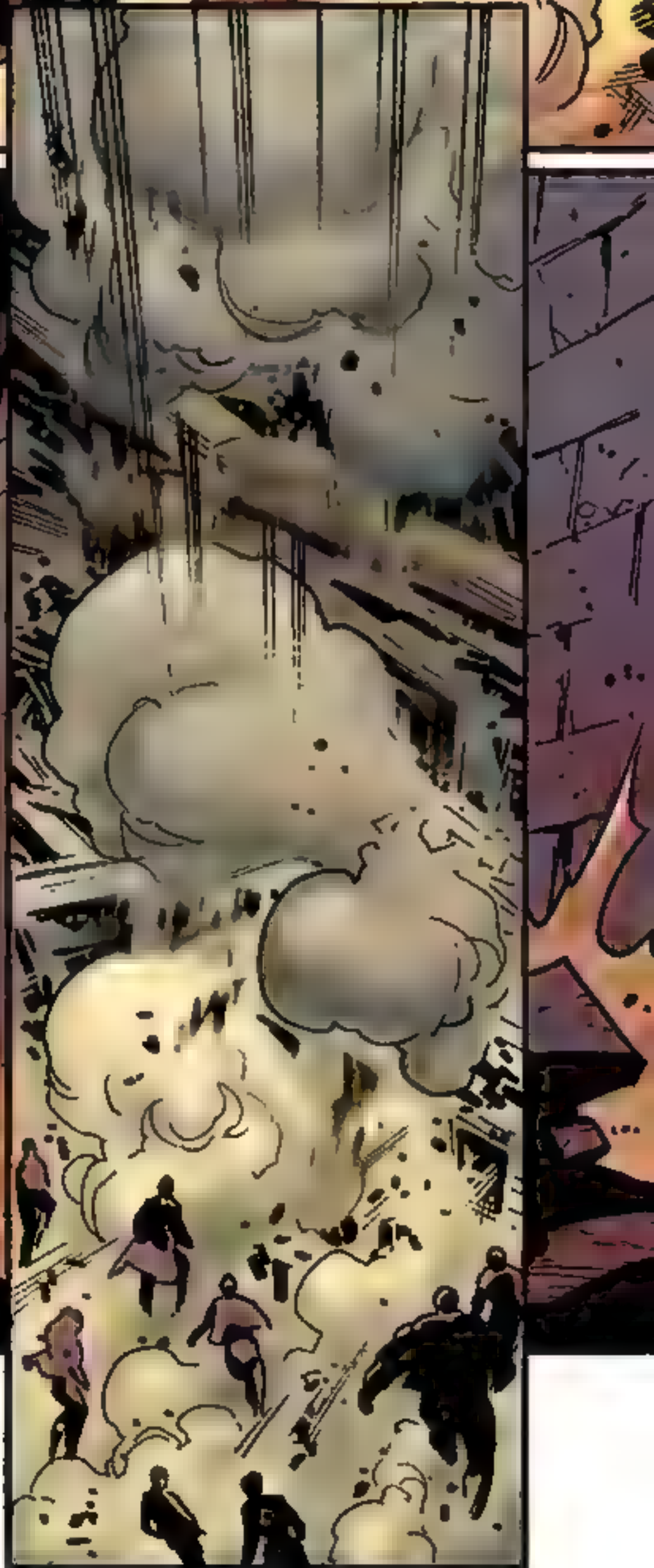
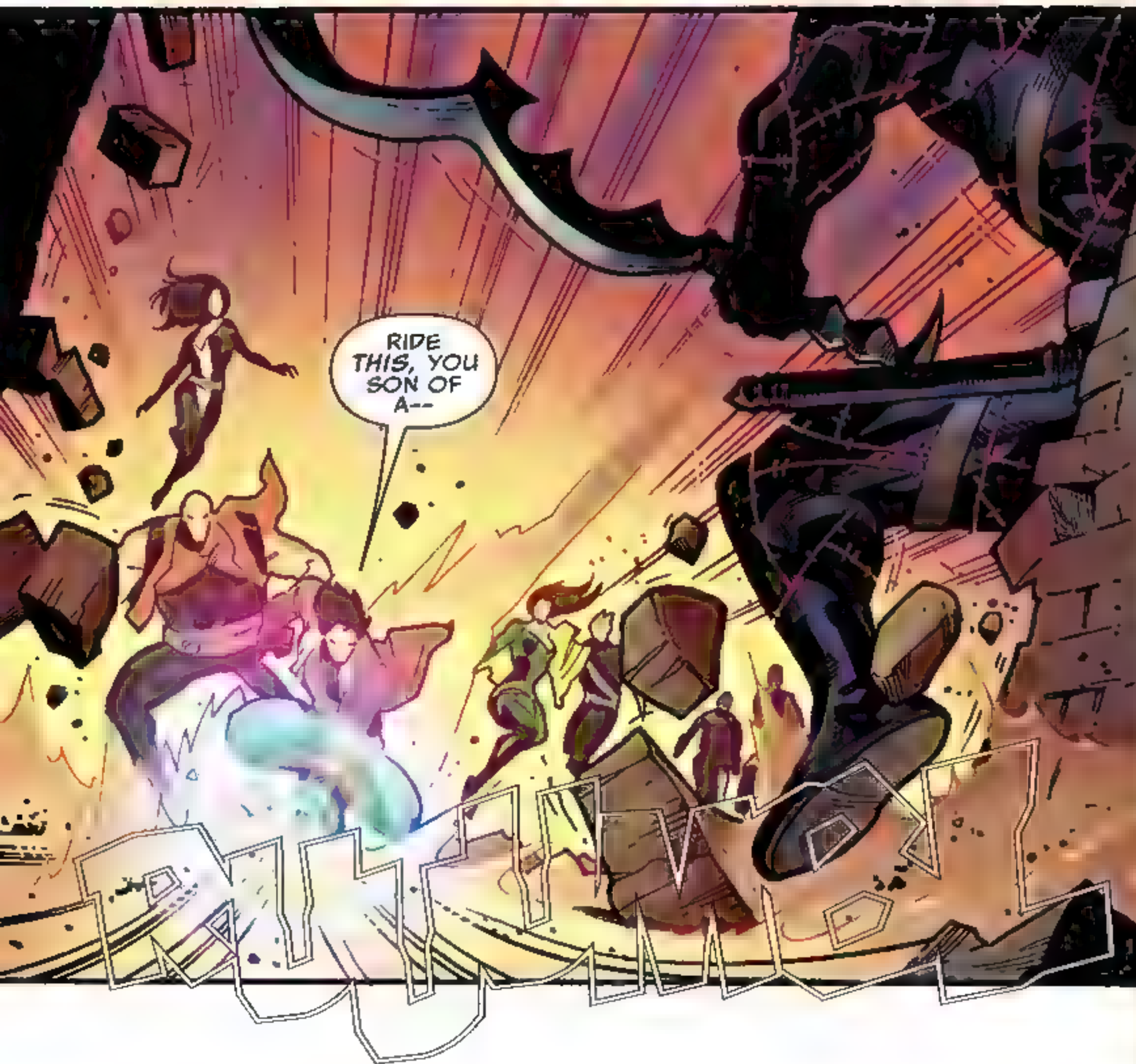
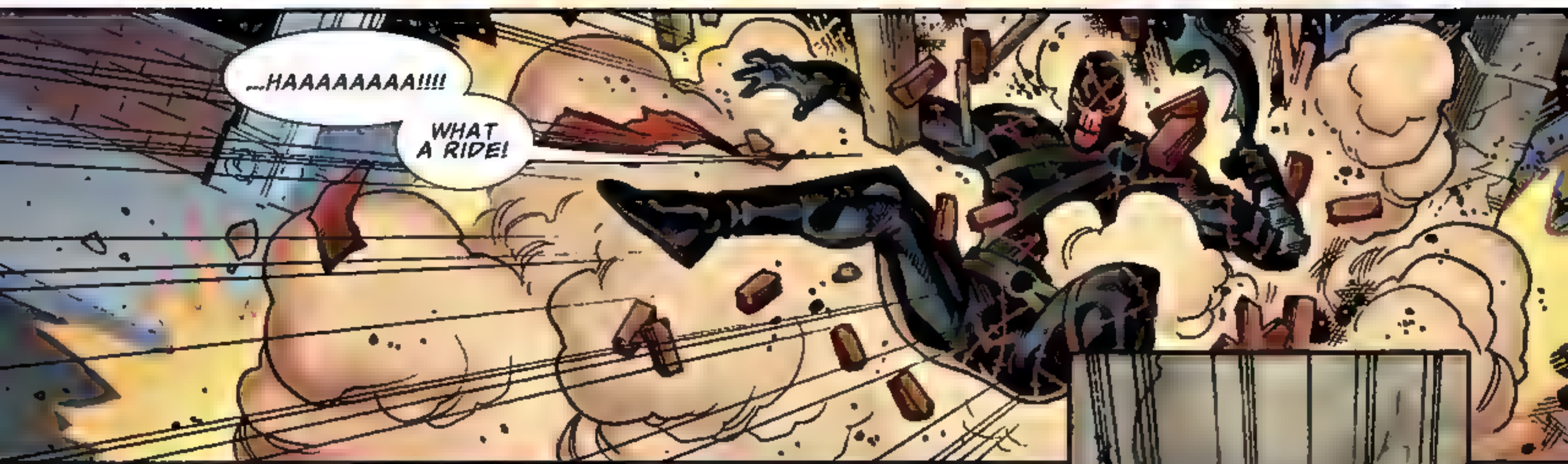
AH'LL
TELL YE
LATER.



SO YOU'RE
A WARRIOR
BACK WHERE
YOU COME
FROM, HUH?

STRONG.
FAST. I'LL
GIVE YOU
THAT.

BUT
NOT THE
BRIGHTEST
BULB.







JAMIE!
WHAT'S
WRONG?

IT'S...



OH GOD.
I'VE SEEN THIS
LOOK ON YOUR
FACE BEFORE.

IT'S THE
DUPE, ISN'T IT.
HE'S DEAD.

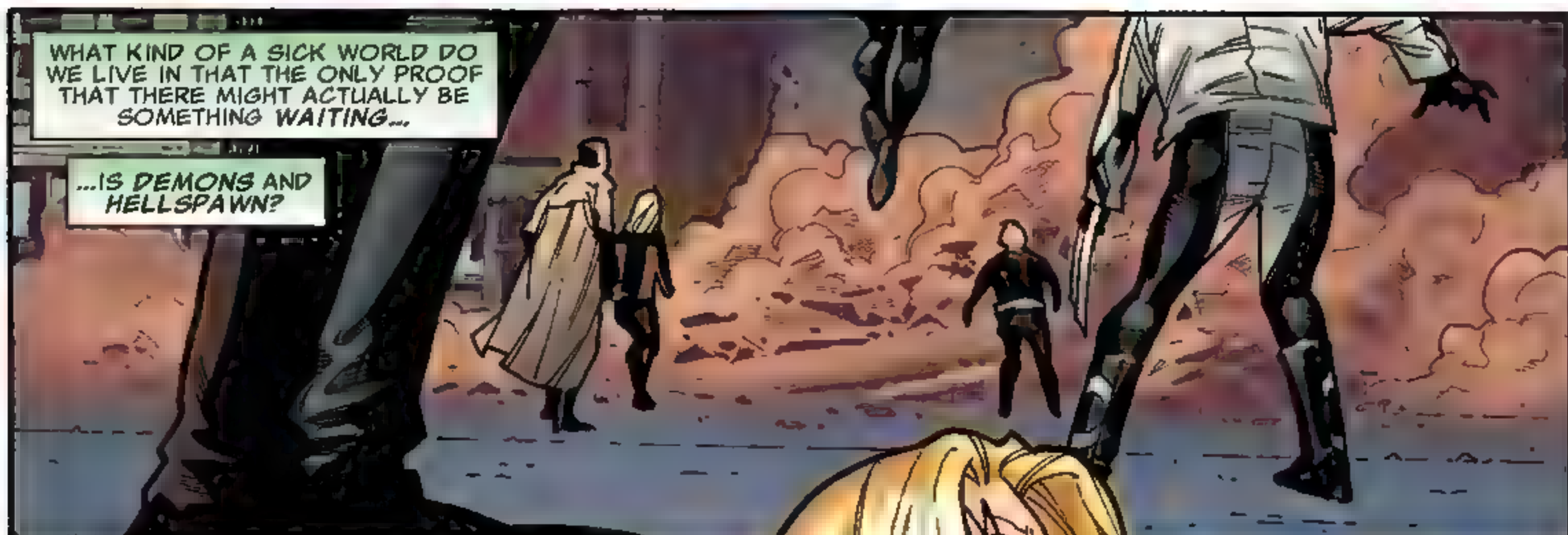
YEAH.

I FELT A
FLASH OF PAIN...
THEN...THEN
NOTHING.



WHAT I DON'T SAY TO
THERESA IS THAT IT'S THIS
SENSE OF EMPTINESS THAT
MAKES ME WORRY THAT
WHEN WE DIE, THERE'S
NOTHING WAITING FOR US.

NO HEAVEN. NO
REWARD. ZIP.

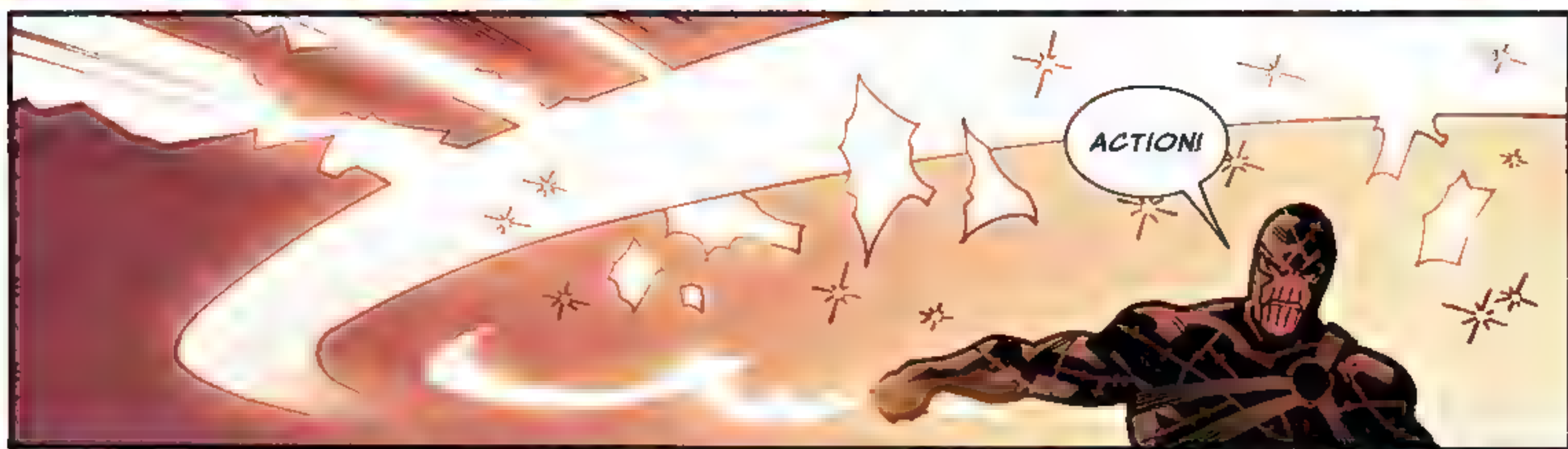


WHAT KIND OF A SICK WORLD DO
WE LIVE IN THAT THE ONLY PROOF
THAT THERE MIGHT ACTUALLY BE
SOMETHING WAITING...

...IS DEMONS AND
HELLSPAWN?



GET
BACK!



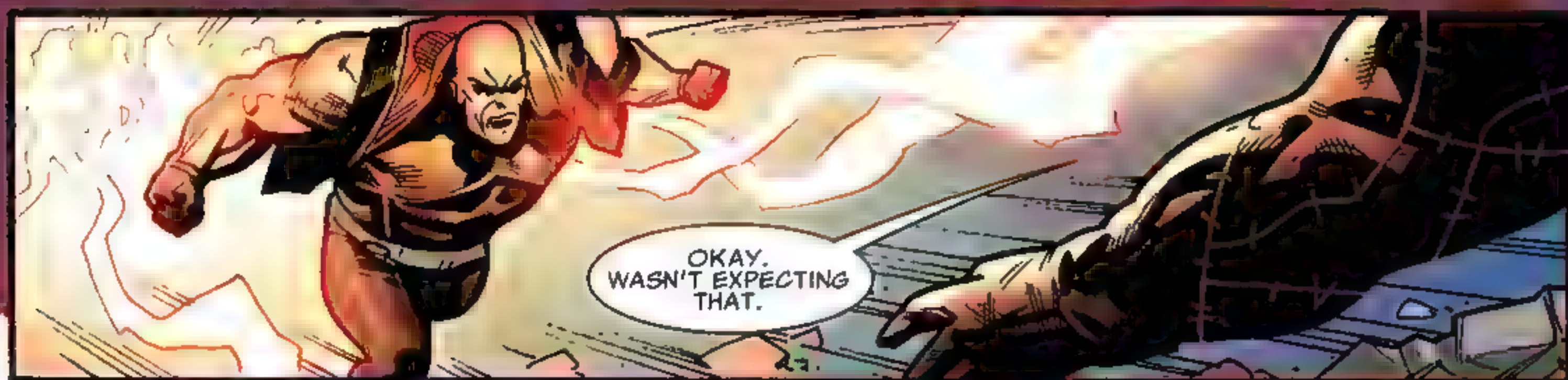


THEY DIDN'T
KNOW WHAT THEY
WERE RUNNING INTO,
THE POOR--



--FOOLS?

WHAT
THE--?



OKAY.
WASN'T EXPECTING
THAT.



YA WANT
BLOODBATH?
HUH? DO YA?

UINNFFFFF!!!



HERE'S YER
BLOODBATH!!!!

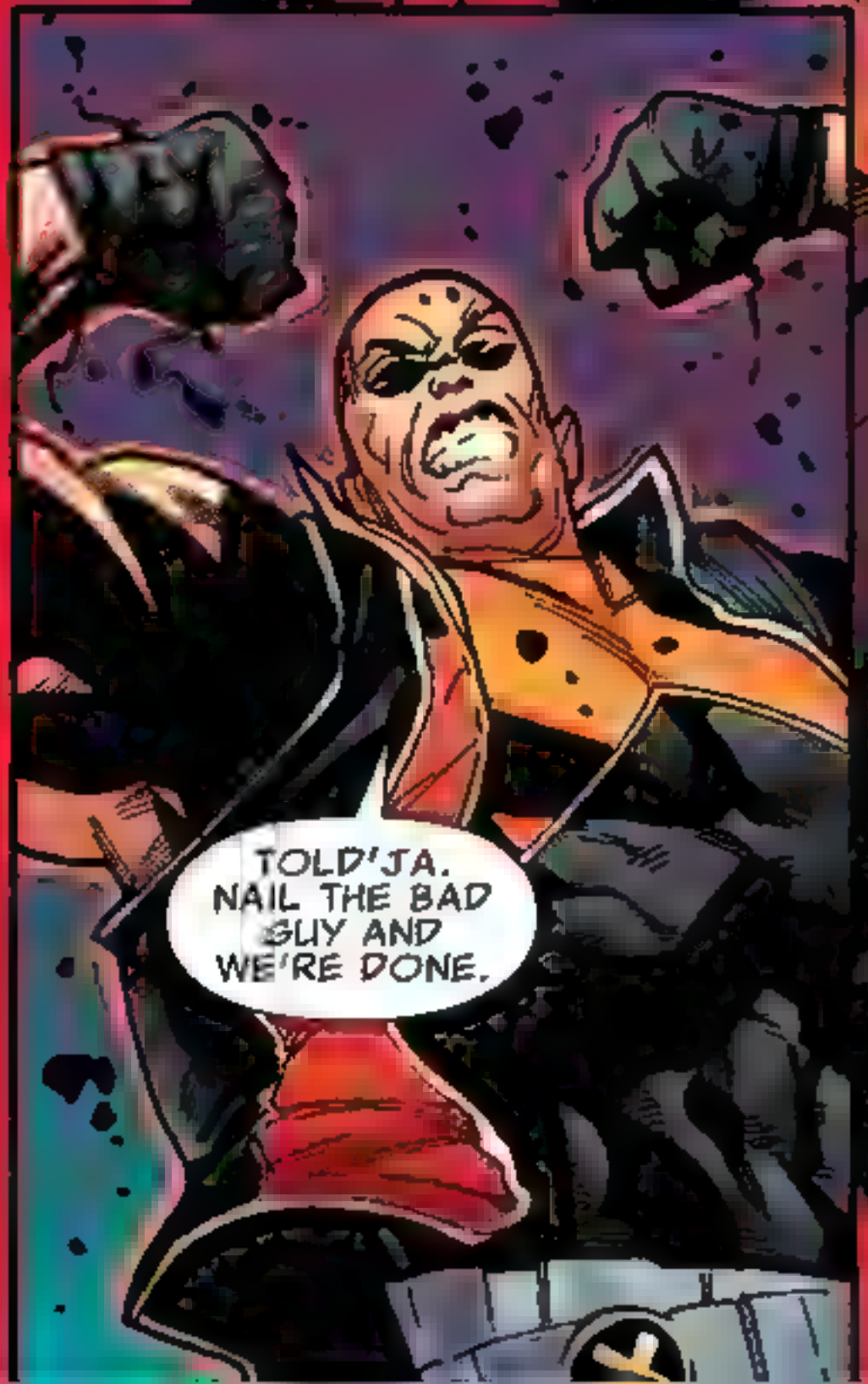


WHOA.

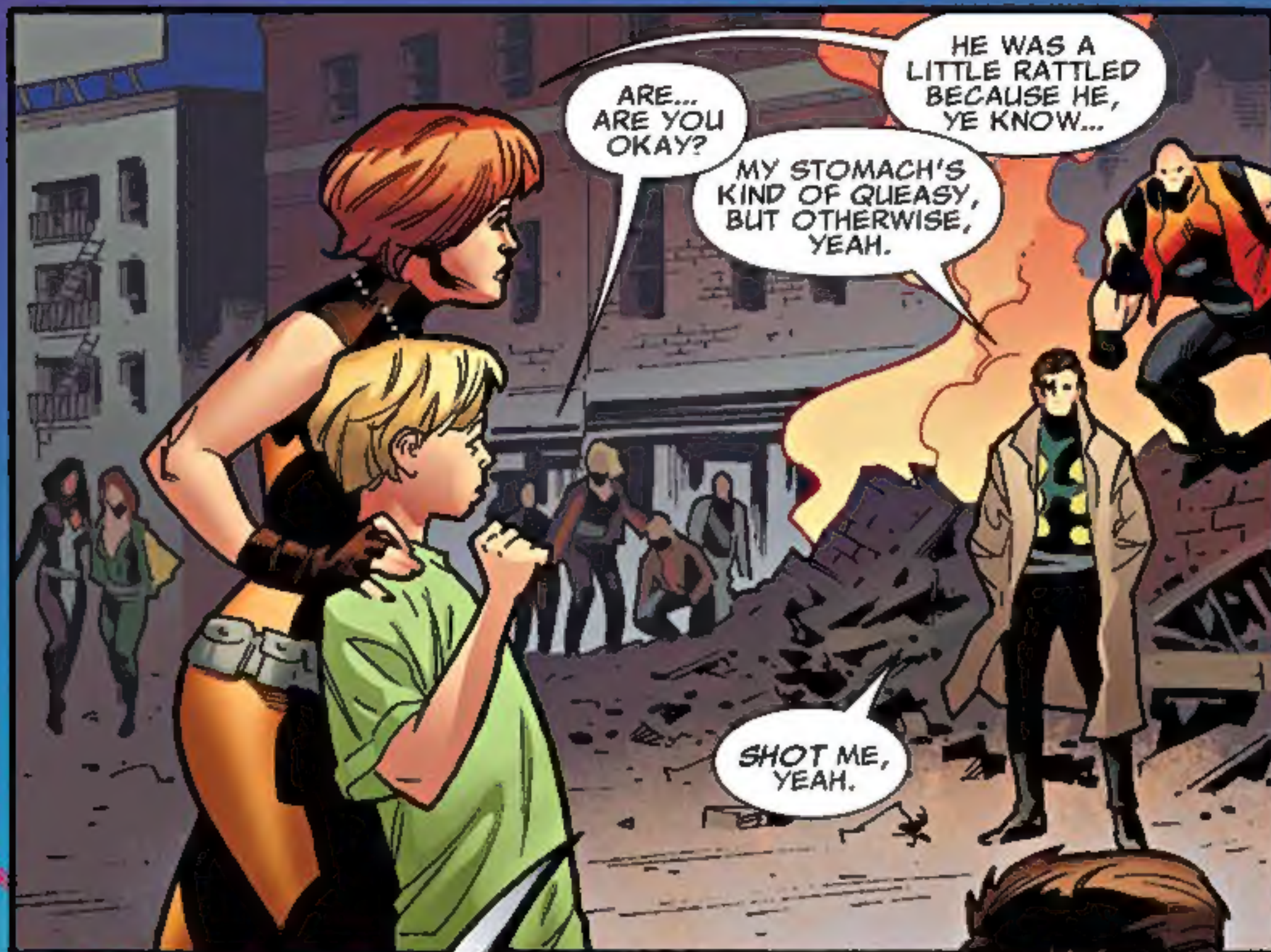
GROSS.

THAT'S...
THAT'S JUST...

EXCELLENT.



TOLD'JA.
NAIL THE BAD
GUY AND
WE'RE DONE.



"FADE TO BLACK."



WHAT...LAYLA?
BUT SHE'S...AND...

HUH?

...AND...ONE OF
MY DUPES? IS
THAT...I DON'T
UNDERSTAN--

GO...GO...
DON'T LET...
RAHNE...GET
AWAY...

...ALL...
UP TO...
YOU...

WHAT THE
HELL--?

X

X-PERT WITNESSES

Peter David here with spoiler warnings this month, kids. See, the letters below discuss some of the exciting post-Schism developments that Marvel's been advertising for the past weeks. But these developments include events that aren't actually slated to be revealed in these pages until Issue #230. If you're one of those folks who strives to avoid finding out about what's coming up so that you can be surprised every month, then don't read beyond this paragraph. Instead close it up and come back after you've read #230. Come to think of it, that's probably good advice for the letters columns in the next two issues as well.

Hi there, guys!

I never wrote a fan-letter, but seeing how I've been following X-Factor since #1 and loving every moment of the plot and so many of the artists that scribbled through these pages though these years, I thought it was way past due!

This one is certainly my favorite comic title. From the cover, to the first-page recap, news of Peter's daughter (I feel like a creep whenever I realize I want to know how she's doing) and all the way to the fanpage. I see the character development and the effort you put on on making something that's at the same time serious, relaxing and thought-provoking. I was glad to see the full team on the cover of the post-Schism X-Factor, gives me a sense of security to see them all there, when my other favorite titles changed so much. X-Factor always seemed to be apart from the rest of the X-Mess, I'm glad they are sticking together. I'm curious about the new additions though, wondering how well they'll fit in (a full soccer team now, I hope everyone will play along nicely).

Anyway...These last years have been a pleasure, and X-Factor the most consistently amazing title I've read on Marvel for a long time.

Thanks for the countless moments of joy I've had watching our babies grow.

Sincerely yours,
Julia Almeida

And thank you for the kind words, Julia. My little personal additions to the recap page exist for the same reason this letters page does: to give you guys whatever little bit more we can in appreciation for sticking with us month after month (since none of this extra editorial matter shows up in the trade paperbacks). However I might quibble with the term "X-Mess" since it sounds a bit pejorative (unless it's referring to the large room where they eat meals). After all, how bad a mess can it be if it's going to result in the return of Havok and Polaris to these pages? A return that we can guarantee is going to have some serious long-term ramifications. Will they play nicely? Well, some of the time. Other times...not so nicely. But that's what keeps things interesting around here.

Hey Mr. David,

I'm glad to see some ongoing storylines wrapped up and new ones beginning, especially centered around #224.1, which I am advising to all of my friends who have been dragging their feet about when to start getting into the book. I told them now is the time, and the Point One Issue really served its purpose for what a Point One Issue is supposed to be about. I've noticed some of the other titles haven't quite understood the idea. It isn't just a "bonus book"; it is meant to be a true Jumping-On point for new readers. So far the subsequent issues have followed the trend, so that anyone can understand them without having read all of the neo-classic Peter David X-Factor issues. I'm still pushing my friends to buy all the back-issues or trades anyways, though.

I saw in Marvel Previews that Havok and Polaris will be returning to X-Factor soon. I am hoping no one is leaving the book timed with their arrival, because I don't want to see anyone go. There are still so many story arcs in progress, and new ones yet to come, for

these characters. I have to say, though, I really hope a few of the arcs will be laid to rest, lol. When will we finally learn the connection between Longshot and Shatterstar? I have the feeling that it will NOT be what readers expect. If I know you, it will finally come down to it, and everyone is expecting Longshot is Shatterstar's father, then they find out something that just makes them say... What the Hell?? And it sounds like you have a lot planned for Layla Miller, judging by the plethora of clues and info dropped in the last few issues. I have no clue where that story is going yet. Good job!

When Havok and Polaris do show up, I am expecting to see some tension between Havok and Madrox. Alex Summers tends to follow Cyclops in moving into leadership roles, but I don't see Madrox stepping aside. He's come a long way since the original X-Factor run. And I'm wondering if Polaris will take another trip to Crazytown. She's done it a few times over the last decade, and it doesn't even involve brainwashing or mind-control, it's all natural! And fun to watch. So I'm actually crossing my fingers on that one.

Well, hopefully if you pack enough characters into the book, Marvel will eventually decide to start up some spin-offs so we can get Astonishing X-Factor and Uncanny X-Factor going too! Then we can have even more X-Factor every month, and the "screen time" to see more of our favorite characters. So, until it turns out that Monet is actually Penance, and Penance is actually Emplate, and Emplate is actually Monet... MAKE MINE MARVEL!!

Mark McCracken
Shavertown, PA

Well, Mark, I was about to do a whole Emplate-is-Monet storyline, but I don't want to lose you as a customer, so I'll just have to scuttle that and go back to my original plan of revealing that Emplate and Penance are actually Longshot and Shatterstar. Hah! Bet'cha didn't see that coming. As for how matters are going to fare in terms of leadership struggles between Havok and Madrox well, as you can see by the end of this issue, who says that Madrox will even be around?

Peter and the rest of the X-Factor team,

This is the first time I've ever written to a comic book letters page in the years and years that I've been reading comics but I've been wanting to write in to you about this book for a long time now and I was excited to see you'd brought the format back. I know there have already been folks that have said it better than I will but I just wanted to say that I've never read a more consistently enjoyable and well done comic book. It's hands down the book I most look forward to purchasing every month.

It's amazing the way you craft the stories. They are so well thought out and sometimes it seems like a loose end won't be tied up for years but you always get back to it. I get so excited when a theme that hasn't been addressed in a while returns - there's always a payoff and I love that I can count on that. It's also amazing how you're able to take this team to all the different corners of the Marvel Universe and still make it feel effortless and planned. Showing their perspective of large crossover events is also always a treat and never feels forced. Even if these characters and the situations they get into weren't set in the Marvel universe, they'd still be breathtaking on their own. I've gotten as many friends as I can to read this book and I even give it to the ones that aren't that into comics because I think it will sell them on the appeal of what a clever, modern super hero book can be. Certainly didn't mean to rant but I've been meaning to say all of that for a long time to express my gratitude for this book existing. Please keep it up for as long as you can and I know it will continue to be read and enjoyed by people like me that see how special it is.

That's about it! The only other thing I can think to say is how surprised I am that you haven't touched on what I think could be an incredible storyline now that you have Longshot and Shatterstar as regular team

members... MOJO! My favorite villain of all time--I know you could do amazing thing with him and the Mojoverse

Your loyal reader,
Casey Bennett

Funny that you should mention Mojo, Casey. Not that he's necessarily showing up, but there will be some tendrils from the Mojoverse extending themselves into X-Factor's business before you know it. I also want to say how much I appreciate the fact that you're telling your friends about our humble endeavors. Word of mouth is the best way to increase sales and build the book into the kind of success we know all you guys want for our beleaguered detective agency.

Hello Mr. David,

I'm a fairly new reader of your recent X-Factor series, reading the Madrox mini-series a few months ago and continuing with X-Factor through issue 225. (What a luxury for me to blast through six-plus years of work in such a small span of time!) Your character work and dialogue is exemplary; on my first read-through, I've focused mainly on those aspects of your craft. I've begun to re-read the series, though, and I've seen that most of your arcs leave a dangling thread or two. Are there any plans on revisiting, say, Old Man Tryp, Josef Huber, the Karma Project, the alternate future timeline that created Cortex, the Summers Rebellion timeline... just to name a few? I suppose I am worried since you name drop the show "LOST" once or twice, and, well, we know how that turned out. I am also concerned about the team expanding to a size that is, in fact, big for a football team, so to speak. All told, your series is one of the jewels in the Marvel line, and I hope Marvel gives you as much time as you require to tell us the stories you have in store.

Thank you,
Brad Barker

As do we, Brad, although since Marvel believes in us enough to have us putting out the book on practically a biweekly basis, I wouldn't be concerned about the time clock running out on us anytime soon. As for revisiting the things you were asking about? The answer is—yes and no. Half of them will be showing up within the next year, and even the next few issues. See? How's that for service!

-PAD

NEXT ISSUE



THE BLOODBATH
CONTINUES!



EMPIRE